

sultado final es un trabajo enormemente esclarecedor, estético y profundo a la vez.

A pesar de la coherencia y objetividad demostrada por Marvin D'Lugo a lo largo de su estudio, resulta un tanto molesta la constante identificación de la «cultura española» y de «los españoles» con la cultura monolítica, católica, imperial, intolerante y tradicional, olvidándose de que esa otra gran tradición liberal heterodoxa también es una parte capital de la cultura española y es precisamente la que Saura trata de rescatar y reivindicar repetidamente en su obra, como el autor ha comprobado extensamente. También resulta chocante leer que «Los chunguitos», incluidos en la banda sonora de *Deprisa, deprisa* son simplemente un grupo de rock, cuando en realidad su abastardada y popularizada forma del flamenco es rescatada arriesgadamente por Saura del basurero estético-musical de la marginación y el desclasamiento.

La complementaridad de los estudios de Agustín Sánchez Vidal y Marvin D'Lugo es curiosamente reproducida en la portada de los dos libros; en ambos aparece una fotografía de Saura prácticamente idéntica en posición de dirigir un rodaje, ya por una mera coincidencia o acaso de manera intencional por parte de los editores. Se trata, en definitiva, de dos lecturas distintas y complementarias de una misma obra de autor.

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## CREACIÓN

Eduardo Mendicutti. *Última conversación*. Barcelona, Tusquets, 1991, 178 pp.

Were this novel to have been written as a chronologically linear narrative, its readers might have lost interest —very early on— in what could easily be viewed as an all too common story about the late twentieth-century economic realities of life which forced Amalia, the protagonist, into selling Montecarmelo, her family's Andalusian estate, to the highest bidder. Such is not the case, however, as the eight chapters of this novel belie the promise of the —title's— last conversation between Amalia and Marcos, the antique dealer who, in his unrelenting intent on buying an incon-

sequential painting which depicts the Nativity, also has a sharp eye for a multitude of other potentially marketable collector's items.

What is cast within the first and last chapters of this novel is not in fact that final, tortuous conversation between Marcos and the woman who has been holding out as long as she could before succumbing to what amounts to the humiliating disintegration of her life and her family. Rather, in a fashion which could ironically parody the sought-after aforementioned «Nativity» painting, the proverbial beginning and end of the novel serve as frame for the jumbled unfolding of a multitude of highly colloquial, disjointed and muted verbal interchanges between the novel's more than twenty characters in which one particular conversation is both melody and theme: the habitual and numerous cat-and-mouse dialogues between Marcos and Amalia.

In short, the reader is confronted with a narrative discourse that heightens its own textuality by means of the skillful interweaving of a plethora of devices, namely, narrative omniscience and point of view, focalization, scene and summary, digression, analepsis and prolepsis and description and dialogue, to name but a few.

As the novel begins, the reader's attention becomes fixed right away on Amalia as she sits on her balcony and contemplates the omnipresent and treacherous sea; this clever dual focalization is immediately fused with the heiress' own musings about what —we find out in chapter eight— is to be that final conversation with the antique dealer. Ironically enough, the reader really only hears one or two phrases of that fateful conversation in the last pages, while Amalia's impending judgement day gives way in the next six or so chapters to a virtual life flashing before her eyes —and the reader's. By means of superimposition, simultaneity, and slow motion optics, Amalia's entire genealogy is syphoned out in bits and pieces in stream of conscience and silent movie fashion, since what we think we are hearing for the first time has been diluted in Amalia's memory over the many years that her family has owned Montecarmelo.

The primary movers in this chorus of faceless voices assume their own fictive personalities by means of the lifestyles, obsessions and neurotic quirks which nurture the reader's curiosity to read on in an attempt to find out what makes each one of them tick: Amalia's father don Luis, who either suffers from Alzheimer's dis-

ease or some other form of dementia; her homosexual brother Antonio and his lover Esteban; her nine-year old son Borja who seems prone to bizarre behavior and prolonged periods of isolation in the mansion's chapel; her absent ex-husband Rafael Murillo; Lola Porcel, the old family maid whose senility annoys everyone, including her counterpart Julia, the younger maid; and the list goes on, with each one bearing some sort of metonymically identifiable I.D. tag. Tying all of these voices together is that of the manicurist, Cigala, whose comically astute colloquial renderings of people, places and things in the community not only fill many gaps in the story, but also intensify everyone's—including the reader's—curiosity by means of the juicy gossip that is spread at the hands of this facetious professional.

To all of this is added a series of fictive binary-character oppositions that exiliriate the humdrum realities of human existence: Amalia and Marivá, the madam who will soon profane Montecarmelo by turning it into a house of prostitution whose proximity to the American base at Rota is no coincidence; Julia and Lola Porcel; Amalia and her brother Antonio who has left her by herself to handle all of the family matters; and, of course, the pitted rivalry between Amalia and Marcos. Everything boils down to the in's and out's of a typical—dysfunctional—family as recalled by Amalia while she sits and awaits Julia's announcement that Marcos has arrived for the final transaction: to write out the check for everything in the house, including the infamous painting of the Nativity. Amidst the cries, whispers, echoes, gossip and secrets that we—think we—hear emanating from a family that is the total opposite of the holy family of the coveted Nativity setting, should it really surprise us to hear the narrator say that the conversation between Marcos and Amalia «is orphaned of any peculiar sonority whatsoever» (104)?

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Alfonso Costafreda. *Poesía completa*. Ed. Jordi Jové y Pere Rovira. Barcelona, Tusquets, 1990, 364 pp.

This much needed edition, which includes all of the work published during Costafreda's lifetime as well as the posthumous *Sui-*